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LETTERS

FROM SUNNYSIDE AND SPAIN

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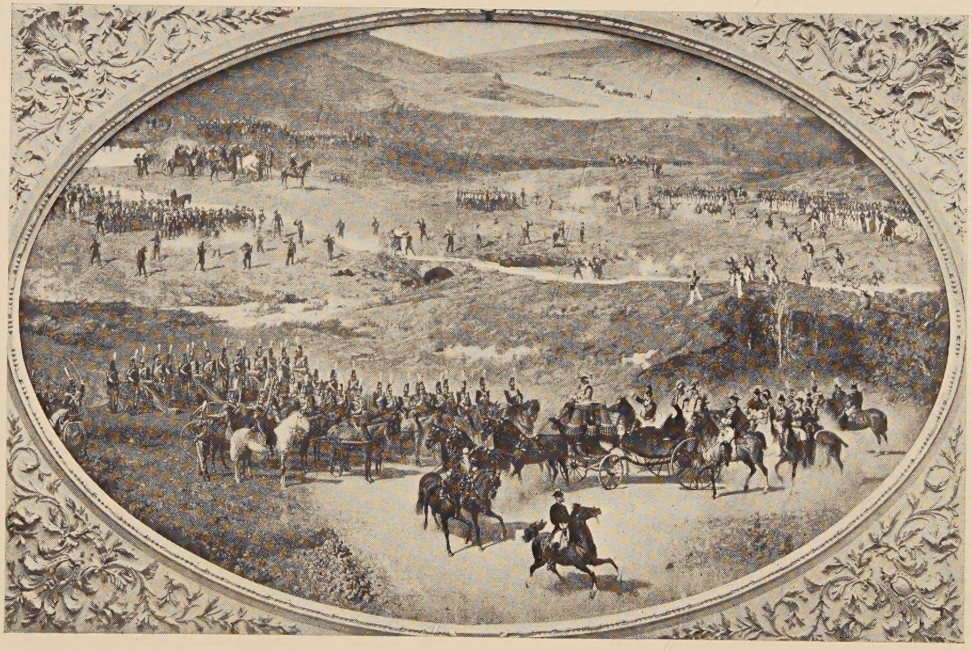

QUEEN MARIA CHRISTINA REVIEWING HER TROOPS.

From the original painting by Mariana Fortuny (1838-1874) in the Museo de Arte Moderno, Madrid.

LETTERS

FROM SUNNYSIDE AND SPAIN

BY

WASHINGTON IRVING

EDITED BY

STANLEY T. WILLIAMS

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PREFACE

SOME *of these letters have appeared in* The Yale Review. *These are now reprinted, substantially unchanged, with other letters, to make available in book form the most important personal correspondence of* IRVING *between the years 1840 and 1845. (The letters of the second part of this volume are now in process of translation by Señor José de la Peña, of Seville, for publication in Spain.) No attempt has been made, as in the two recently published notebooks of* IRVING (*Yale University Press, 1927*), *to document fully the many allusive passages or to explain in detail the significance in* IRVING'S *career of places, persons, or events. Such study will be found later in a complete biography of* IRVING. *The emphasis here, save for brief interpretations of important episodes, is upon an exact reproduction of the original manuscripts, now in the Yale University Library. The letters here stand as* IRVING *wrote them, excepting minor changes in spelling and punctuation.*

The eighteen letters, divided for convenience into two groups, are representative of IRVING'S *private correspondence during these six years. They center about his two establishments, that of his private life and that of his public career: Sunnyside and Madrid. From them our knowledge of* WASHINGTON IRVING *between the ages of fifty-seven and sixty-two may approach intimacy.*

I wish to express my grateful appreciation of the unfailing kindness of Mr. Starling W. Childs, of New York City, and of Mr. Lewis S. Welch, of New Haven. Their interest in these letters has made possible the publication of this volume.

S. T. W.

New Haven, Connecticut,
1 August 1928.

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SUNNYSIDE

THIS group of letters depicts an interlude. They were written when Washington Irving's literary fame was a commonplace, and just prior to his ambassadorship to Spain.

In 1841 Irving was living quietly at "Sunnyside," his country home near Tarrytown on the Hudson, with no intimation of the somewhat harassed term in Madrid, or the intense creative effort to be expended on his last history, for which he was just beginning to gather materials. Few letters in all his vast correspondence show him more at peace with the world than these records of his life with his intimate friends, among whom were the Brevoorts, Paulding, Philip Hone, West, the painter, and William Astor.

He had learned how to turn off a graceful letter when he was a gay youngster in the society of New York and Philadelphia. Since then he had lived, at different times, nineteen years abroad, many of them in that mood of observation, musing, and leisurely writing which was so strongly a part of his nature. As will be seen in these pages, he never could allow events or persons to interrupt his romantic appreciations. He is now, when he writes the first of these letters, nearly fifty-seven years old, but the mood is still the same; and surely never were conditions more favorable for its indulgence.

Without the cottage were the scenes he loved best; within, the nieces, six of them, and their friends—all, for the most part, happy and devoted. Tarrytown, he notes elsewhere, has mounted the hill, has an Episcopalian church with an organ, boasts music on the harp and piano, carriages, yachts, and picnics. "I do not know," he adds, "when I have seen more delightful little parties, or more elegant little groups of females." A favorite word—"elegant"! The notebooks which he kept betray a more forceful Irving, quite able to give and take in the world. But these letters lend countenance to a tradition which was true to one side of his nature: his love of domestic life, gossip, whim-whams.

Few writers as prolific as Irving escaped as easily as he the weight of writing. This was so, at least, up to the time which these letters reflect. Then the least shadow of compulsion drove him from his desk. In these years, he wrote little save for his friend Gaylord's magazine, *The Knickerbocker* and the sublimated friendship book, typical of his age, the *Biography and Poetical Remains of the Late Margaret Miller Davidson*. He was merely happy, and good company —except that he missed his favorite niece, Sarah Storrow, the only surviving daughter of his sister Catherine. She and her husband sailed on May 1, 1841, to live in Paris. One suspects that beneath Irving's ease of intercourse with all manner of people were a few bonds of affection which gave him deep joy and commensurate pain. In any case, Mrs. Storrow, whom he never forgets, whom he mentions constantly, elicited from him his most intimate letters. It is his thought of her comprehension that has given us these reflections on family affection, on birds, and on house-parties; as well as the humor of the thunderstorm and the gossip of society in the New York of the 'forties, including the "terrible feud between Mrs. Mary Jones and Mrs. Doctor Mott."

These persons and a score of others prominent in Irving's world now reappear. They are not heralded by annotation,

but readers interested in the life of the period may recognize them, and still enjoy Irving's harmless satire. Far more important than these in the letters is Irving himself. On solitude, on writing, on the France of his youth, on America in 1841, he has still something to say.

The first letter bears the superscription, "To my Six Nieces"; all the others in this group are addressed to Sarah Storrow.

New York, Feb. 4th 1840

My dear girls,

I WRITE to let you know that it is quite uncertain when I shall return home. I am leading a very busy and dissipated life and am now writing in bed at four o'clock in the morning, having no leisure in the day time. And now for Gossip, which I know is what you all dearly love. Pierre and Helen like the birds, are looking out for a new nest at the approach of Spring time. They seem bothered to decide between two excellent places, Miss Seton's in the upper part of the city, and Miss Laidlaw's in Warren Street, and having thus got into a state of indecision are likely to remain there for some time to come. Helen shewed me a letter from Julia, who appears to be enjoying herself very rationally at Washington. She had not been out much as gaieties had not commenced, but had been with Mrs Paulding leaving cards and paying visits. She was to dine in the course of a day or two at the President's. She found Mrs. Paulding an invaluable guide and companion to pilot her through the perplexities of

a first launch in Washington. I have not been able to get to Auntabby's [*sic*] until yesterday. All are well there. Carry Blackwell is on a visit to your cousin Abby, and the young folks appear to be enjoying themselves mightily. Your Auntabby is on the point of losing all her good servants, for which I am very sorry.

I saw Mrs Constant several days since looking like herself again—which you know is every thing that is lovely and lovable. She is passing her time very pleasantly in New York, and so is the Judge and so is Willie. I met the Judge at dinner at Mr Cary's where I also met Mr Ludlow, so that Westchester was ably represented there. The Judge complains of the severe duties of the knife and fork which he has to perform, yet he appears to thrive in spite of hard work. One gentleman at table (Mr March) asked me about my *handsome* niece. I asked him which of the six he meant, as they all come under that description.

On Sunday I took a family dinner at Mr Schermerhorn's, and in the evening there was a gathering there from Treat's and the General's. It was very pleasant. The three establishments being so near together enables them to meet often and promptly at each other's houses and renders them quite independent of Society at large. Mr. Schermerhorn's new house is extremely commodious. He has fitted it up with much taste. Annie's room, which during the occupancy of Mr Ruggles was painted in fresco by Brijaldi, is elegantly furnished, and is altogether, I

should think, the most beautiful bed chamber in New York.

On Monday evening I was at Mr Sam Ward's (who married Miss Astor). He has commenced housekeeping in Bond Street, in very pretty style. There was no company there excepting Mr William Astor's family and three or four foreign artists and literati, beside Mr Longfellow. We had some exquisite music from a young German performer, a successor to Schlessinger, and, to my taste, superior to him. Mrs Ward sang two or three things very well. She has taken great pains with herself and is constantly improving in her singing.

Today I take a ghostly dinner with my pious and reverend friend Dr Wainwright, and tomorrow I take a sympathizing dinner with the "Vidder and the fatherless"—so you see what an edifying life I am leading.

I enclose you cards of invitation for the great Brevoort Fancy ball, which is convulsing the whole fashionable world. If any of you are inclined to go, I will take you there. No extra expense of any consequence need be incurred (and I will bear it) as a few ribbands fancifully disposed can constitute a passable fancy dress. I think Kate might arrange a primitive dutch dress and go as Katrina Van Tassel, just from the Van Tassel cottage.

As Kate says "the carriage is at the door" so I must conclude with love to the Lady Abbess.

Your affectionate uncle

W. I.

Sunnyside Cottage Saturday May 8th 1841

I WROTE to you a few days since, my dear Sarah, while I was in town, and my letter was to go by the Havre packet. I forgot to mention among my town gossip that I was at a musical soiree at Mrs Brevoort's, which was conducted in very elegant style, and where we had an agreeable assemblage and very good music both vocal and instrumental. Julia Grinnell and her husband were there and were much pleased. Among the guests was Mrs Hammersley. It was the first time I had met her in public since her father's death. She greeted me very cordially and we had much conversation together. I was delighted with her appearance and manners, so lovely in person, and then so amiable, quiet and lady-like. I was more than usually pleased and interested with her because she talked of you so sweetly and kindly and seemed to appreciate your character so justly. I was grieved, however, to see that there was no intercourse between her and her sisters, though in the same room and not far from each other. I presume they had spoken to each other when they met, but I observed no communication between them throughout the evening. And yet you remember how closely and tenderly they were but recently entwined together in sisterly affection. I cannot conceive any excuse sufficient for such alienation—at least none that I hear suggested. What are the sordid considerations of pounds, shillings and pence to these dearer concerns of the heart: and

what have the jars and janglings of husbands to do with the affections of sisters that have sprung up from the cradle and should continue to the grave. Good heavens what contradictory mortals we are! we grieve and repine at the separation that death and distance effect between kindred hearts—and here are sisters, but five paces asunder, yet apparently as severed in all the sweetest sympathies of our nature as if half the world were thrust between them!

The evening before last I returned to the dear little family circle at Sunnyside, and found all well, and as cheerful as the continued bad weather would permit. Your mother had taken advantage of two transient intervals of sunshine to drive to Eliza's, and had enjoyed her drive and her visits. She sleeps very well, and keeps up her usual tone of spirits. I long for genial settled weather that she may drive out daily and enjoy the opening season.

This is a bright Sunday morning—one of the very, very few real spring mornings we have had this season. For the first time this year the girls have sallied out after breakfast without hat and shawl, and loitered around the porch; and admired the honeysuckles; and played with the dogs and pigeons and strolled arm in arm about the grass plots. As I gazed on the well known scene I felt my heart and my eyes filling, and found myself humming the burden of the song "But where art thou!—oh where art thou!" But I checked the feeling, and reproached myself, when so many were left for me to love, and,

I trust, to love me, at repining so meanly [?] that one should be separated from the domestic group. Still it takes time, when one like myself is "in the sere, the yellow leaf," to get over these sudden loppings off. . . .

As we were not to go to church until afternoon, and as this lovely Sabbath morning was too precious to be wasted, I have taken the girls out to enjoy it, as profitably I trust as between church walls, in strolling about the walks and glens and green banks, and inhaling the blessed breath of Spring, which is sufficient to thaw the inmost fountains of the heart and set all the affections in a flow. I do not know when I have been more sensible of this tender influence of the weather; but in fact all nature, which during this cold, tardy, hard-hearted season, has remained spell bound, seemed to start into life this morning. The birds, which hitherto have only now and then ventured a few dubious half melancholy notes, now warbled out boldly in the sunshine; the bees hummed about the scantily opened blossoms, and the pigeons in their frolick morning flights, swept down to the river banks and then circled among the tree tops. The Tappan Sea too had put on all its atmospherical charms. There was scarce a ripple in its surface, and its sundry fleet of sloops gleamed here and there about its wide sunny reaches, or faded away into the blue distance. . . .

As Kate is writing to you I trust to her to give you whatever I may omit of domestic news. Yet what news have we to furnish from our quiet little home,

where one day passes so much like another, especially at this season, when we are almost entirely shut up within ourselves and have no visitors! For my part, as I before observed, I keep out doors, and busy myself about the garden and the fields all day, whenever not absolutely driven in by the rain—so that when evening comes I am completely fagged, and am apt to doze over my book in the drawing room; but then I gain a good night's sleep, and that is always worth working for. In the meantime, in spite of wind and weather, the Spring is advancing; the trees are every day putting out their leaves more and more, and the blossoms beginning to open. We have occasional gleams of sunshine and intervals of warmth, and I think we feel them more sensibly this season on account of their rarity. Within these three days the little Boblinks [*sic*] have begun their tinkling songs among the apple trees and the cat birds are whisking and pecking and carolling about the cottage, and as these are warm weather birds, we hail them as harbingers of sunshine. The nest of the little Phoebe bird under the porch, however, remains unoccupied. This is the second season it has been deserted, but I won't allow it to be disturbed—It shall always remain ready for her—*The Phoebe bird will come back again!*

I am writing before breakfast and I hear the ringing of the breakfast bell and the pattering of footsteps. The sun is shining in at my window and promising a fine day. If it keeps its promise I will turn out horse and vehicle and make the first irrup-

tion [?] this spring into Sleepy Hollow. The little valley must be by this time in blossom, and it is a long while since the girls have had a real excursion for pleasure. By the time this reaches you the garden of the Tuilleries will be in all its beauty, and I can fancy your delight in strolling through its noble alleys, and about its terraces and fountains. How many a delightful morning I have passed there with your poor uncle Peter. Versailles, S' Cloud, S' Germain, also, thanks to the rapidity of railroads, will now be close at hand; with their glorious parks and gardens. With such resorts at command what a residence is Paris! . . .

With kindest remembrances to Mr Storrow I remain my dear Sarah ever most affectionately your uncle

W. I.

Hellgate, July 11th 1841

My dear Sarah,

. . . KATE wrote to you by the last packet, and gave you a chronicle of the events at the Cottage, which as usual, have nothing in them very striking. The fourth or rather 5th of July was celebrated at Mrs Colford Jones' by fireworks, a supper &c at which most of the neighborhood were present, with some few guests from town. The fireworks went off better than last year, but the fête generally, not as well. We missed you and Mrs Constant and I think your absence had a dampening effect with many. It cer-

tainly had with me. I never feel your absence more my dear Sarah, than when I mingle in these little gatherings of the neighborhood, to which you always accompanied me. I feel now how much of my pleasure was reflected from your own happy looks, and from the animated part you took in the social scene. Mrs Sheldon was among the guests at Mrs Jones'. She is gradually getting better of her lameness—but very slowly. I had not much to say to her, nor indeed to any one else on that occasion, for I was not in a talkative mood. I do not find any disposition in the neighborhood to get up musical meetings this season; nor is there any talk of picnics. I have not stirred in the matter myself; for I have not felt much inclination. I have satisfied myself with rural occupations about my place, and with occasional long drives about the country; for which the occasional cool delightful days which we have had this summer have been very favorable. All I want in these drives is a bright communicative companion, that will respond to my feelings and remarks—and this unluckily is a perpetually recurring want that makes me feel your loss.

I suppose Kate has informed you that we are to lose the Perrys from our neighborhood. Capt. Perry has been ordered to take command at the navy yard at Brooklyn; where a house is provided for him. This will fix him for three or four years, after which he will probably be ordered to Sea. Finding there was no likelihood of his being able for several years, to reside at the rural establishment he had just set

up; he has offered it either for sale or to rent for a term of years. We all regret this circumstance extremely, for we were highly pleased with the Perrys and hoped to be very intimate with them.

Among the 4th of July guests at Mrs Colford Jones' was my friend West the painter. He passed three or four days there, and was frequently at the Cottage. He intends making Mrs Jones another visit soon, after which I expect to make an excursion with him to the Highlands. I received a letter not long since from Gouverneur Kemble urging me to make him a visit. He has resumed his station as president of the company, and keeps up his old establishment. His sister Mary has been rather out of health ever since the death of poor Mrs Paulding. I fear I shall find a visit there very melancholy. There are too many associations with that place, that will now be extremely painful to me. I rather think I shall stop there but for a day or so, and make the most of my Highland visit at Brevoort's; who has taken the old Beverley house; (a mile or two below Mr S Gouverneur's) which formerly belonged to the family of the Robinsons, and is associated with the history of the Arnold treason. It is a fine old country seat, with venerable trees, and commands a noble prospect. Mr Brevoort has urged West and myself to pass some days with him.

I am just now on a brief visit to Mr Astor. I came here yesterday (Saturday) and think I shall return home tomorrow. I presume you have heard of the trouble in Mr A's family; arising from a clandestine

marriage of his grand daughter, Miss Louisa Langdon, with young Kane. Mrs Langdon had set her face against this match and had thought she had prevented it, she was therefore excessively indignant at being deceived, and departed for Europe without seeing her daughter, or becoming in any degree reconciled to her. She even went so far as to prevail upon Mr Astor to disinherit her. I presume, however, that this affair will end in the usual way—by a forgiveness of the parties, after many unkind things have been said and done that will be hard to be forgotten. What constant troubles and heart-burnings, and dissensions are occuring in these *rich* families—let us congratulate ourselves, my dear girl, that the curse of wealth has never fallen, nor is likely to fall, on our numerous connexion.

I presume before this you have received the volume containing Miss Davidson's memoir and poetical remains, as I directed one to be forwarded to you. It has met with great success; which I do not attribute to any merit of mine: but to the extreme interest and pathos of the materials placed in my hands. I remitted to the mother the note of hand given by the booksellers for the edition, and transferred to her the copyright, reserving merely [the] right to publish at any time, the memoir, in connexion with my o[ther] writings. I am occasionally exercising my pen in rearranging and modifying old articles, some of which have already appeared in periodical publications. I do this more to get myself into a literary vein, and in hopes that I may, after

a time, strike into something new. Oh! if I could only have a "run of luck" as gamblers say, it would quite set me up again; but I am so pestered with petty cares and concerns, most of them about the affairs of others, and am so taken up and interrupted by all kinds of interruptions and engagements, that I am like a poor fly in a cob web that can neither move leg nor wing and can do nothing but buz.

July 13. I did not return home yesterday; but accompanied Mr Astor in an excursion on the water. We embarked at Hellgate Ferry on board of a sloop hired for the purpose and intended to make a cruise to the Hook; but light baffling winds and calms prevented our getting farther than Corlears Hook and the Navy Yard. Still it was a pleasant and an interesting excursion to me. The day was splendid, and quite cool and temperate. We coasted along those beautiful shores which you have occasionally coasted with me in sail boats and as I saw the old Jones country seat peering through the trees, with its half ruined out houses and weedy garden, I recalled our stroll about its haunted grounds. So you see my dear Sarah: go where I may, you are associated in my mind with every scene.

I am glad to find you were about to undertake the study of the French language in good earnest. It will be an occupation for your lonely hours, and will enable you to enjoy every thing around you.... You will now be for a time at least, a good deal alone. This at first will be irksome, but *it is good to be alone.* It is necessary for the full development of

mind, and the acquisition of habits of meditation and reflection and after a while, we come to understand and feel the delights of occasional solitude.

And now I must bring this somewhat prosy letter to a close as I am about to descend to breakfast, after which I shall set off for town and shall have no leisure to add anything further. . . .

Your afft uncle
WASHINGTON IRVING.

Sunnyside Cottage Sunday July 18th 1841

My dear Sarah:

WE have this day received your letters by the Havre Packet, giving an account of your arrival at Havre & your journey to Paris. . . . Did you notice what a perfect city of Parrots Havre is? Scarcely a house but has one or more of these birds of abomination perched on its window sills, or swinging in a ring, or clambering with beak and claws up and down its wire cage and chattering and squalling like a very imp of Satan. These horrid birds were first brought to Havre in its colonial ships, and now the place seems to have become a mart for them from whence all France is supplied. I ought to have given you a little itinerary of the Seine; up which your uncle Peter and I have so often voyaged and the banks of which we have so often explored. . . .

To come to home affairs—I wrote to you a few days since from Mr Astor's where I was paying a visit. I returned home on Tuesday last and found

all well at the Cottage. Your mother really has been quite animated and active of late; paying visits and taking long drives, which she relished greatly. On Wednesday evening "Kate & I" accompanied the Mrs Jones' on a visit to the Howlands. We all went in Mrs Colford Jones' Omnibus; Mrs Mary Jones & I on the back seat, Mrs Colford & Kate on the middle seat; Mary and Helen Jones on the front seat; and William the coachman and Peter the African imp on the Dickey. We had a delightful drive, and made a charming visit. Mrs Howland kept us to tea, which was served up at table in the good old rural style. We loitered about the place until flying clouds and a muttering of thunder behind the hills warned us that a shower might be gathering. The carriage was therefore summoned, we all embarked, and drove off merrily—chatting and laughing, and felicitating each other on our happy excursion. As we ascended the heights on the cross road, however, just past the old hermit basket maker's, the looks of the weather began to grow wild. The clouds seemed to gather up from all quarters: lightning played in every direction, but there was as yet no thunder, and not a drop of rain. William pushed his horses: we hoped to get home before the storm began; but the air had the chill feeling of approaching rain; it was growing dark; and the lightning became more and more vivid. By the time we passed the Presbyterian church it began to patter, and before we reached Stevens Inn (The Dobbs Ferry post office) we had a rattling shower. The

ladies proposed to stop until the shower should be over. We accordingly alighted at the Inn and sent the carriage to take shelter in the barn or under the shed. And now came on, not a shower, but a deluge —torrents of rain, sheets of lightning, peals of thunder—now and then it would pause a few moments to take breath and then begin again with redoubled fury. There we sat, in the back parlour of the little tavern, illumined by a small lamp and a tallow candle and decorated with rueful engravings of all the presidents, beside a forlorn likeness of myself. What was to be done? The storm seemed likely to last all night; it was either a glare of lightning or pitchy darkness. The Mrs Jones' were inclined to pass the night in the Inn, though poor Mrs Mary dreaded the horrors of a country feather bed. At length, about ten o'clock, there was a kind of intermission—It did not rain "cats and dogs" but only small kittens. Councils were held; a thousand minds were made up and as soon changed—The coachman was consulted. He changed his mind a dozen times to suit his mistress. I was appealed to, but could only answer that, for myself, I should not have the least hesitation to set out, but then I was not a proper person to consult as "I never knew when there was any danger." At last it was determined to tempt the elements—This consultation exhausted a great part of the interval of the storm. The difficulty now was to get the carriage from the stable. Peter had disappeared—he was a "perfect pest" "never at hand when wanted" &c &c. At length he

was found—the carriage was summoned and drawn up to the door: but it had been too long to go under the shed, the rain had beat in it and the bottom was full of water—Mrs Mary had got in but scrambled out again dripping from every feather. Then there was mopping, and rubbing and scrubbing until it was tolerably dry—then dry shoes were borrowed of the landlady; and lanterns provided to be held up by Peter & the coachman. At length, having nearly exhausted the interval of calm we set out. "Now William! take care William! Drive slow William—Hold up the lantern Peter! Are you sure you see the road William? Oh yes ma'am—Oh William! William! a little more to the left William!—Now William—William a little more to the right —are you sure you are in the road?" &c &c &c—Kate laughed. "How can you laugh?" exclaimed Mrs Mary "it's really tempting Providence." For my own part I sat mute. I dared not say I was not afraid, lest it should be taken unkindly. On we went at a smart pace: claps of thunder, sheets of lightning; deluges of rain: Every now and then there was a scream, and at the least jolt Mrs Mary was in an agony. When we reached [illegible] hill, the little African imp was made to alight and go ahead like a Jack o'lantern, to shew the way. "Turn the light this way Peter—Do you see the road William—Yes Ma'am—Better than before—Yes Ma'am—Ah, that's right. Keep ahead Peter—Never mind the rain—Peter—Oh after all Peter is a good boy—never mind your shoes Peter—you shall have a new

pair tomorrow—hold up the light Peter—Ah well ——Peter is a good boy after all" &c &c. At length we reached Mrs Colford's about eleven at night; where I deposited Kate, and, borrowing a pair of India rubber overshoes and an umbrella made the best of my way home. The Jones' now give a history of the evening's adventures to all their friends, and consider that they escaped miraculously from all kinds of deaths and dislocations. I am sorry to say that their gratitude to the redoubtable Peter like the vows of tempest tost mariners to the saints, was forgotten as soon as the Danger was over—he is doomed to be turned off forthwith, having by dint of indulgent treatment, become a perfect little scamp. I had nearly forgot to mention that a good natured bare legged servant girl at the Inn was very kind & attentive to the ladies; and that on parting Miss Mary Jones rewarded her magnificently by giving her her French silk ridicule [*sic*].

This morning we were at church at the Dobbs Ferry church. Quite a full congregation, all the neighbors, and several persons from town. Mr Constant was there. Mrs Constant who is still at Rockaway begins to find benefit from the sea air and ventures to bathe a little, though she will not venture to take the surf. She was terrified by her first trial of it, when the water was very rough. The Irishman who officiates to take care of the ladies in the surf was quite indignant—"By the powers" said he "I have bathed ladies without number. I have bathed

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queens among the rest—but I never bathed any one that behaved so bad."

The sweet briars which you and David planted, and which you inquire about, are flourishing finely. You need not fear that they will not be taken care of. We value too highly every thing that reminds us of you. All our clambering vines have been very luxuriant this season, and are gradually clothing the cottage with verdure. Some of the trumpet creeper too begins to flower; and by another year we shall have the east wall quite gorgeous.

July 21—*On board of the Steamboat bound to New York*—I am making preparations for an excursion to the Highlands in company with Mr West—to pass a few days with General Kemble & Mr Brevoort. I believe I informed you in a former letter that Mr Brevoort has hired the Beverley House, in the Highlands, ready furnished, for the summer. How much I shall miss you in this annual visit, in which of late years you have always accompanied me! . . . I shall not set out for two or three days yet, and shall return to the cottage this evening. Mrs Colford Jones and her young flock set off for Niagara next week. The good lady is full of anticipations of all kinds of difficulties and bothers on the road; having no one to take the lead; Mrs Mary Jones, who has usually been her protector & dictator, intending to open a campaign with Miss Mary at Saratoga Springs. I make no doubt I shall have a whole chronicle to relate to you hereafter of the summer adventures of this most eventful family.

Miss Mary has at present a devoted admirer in young Harmony, nephew of the rich old bachelor merchant, Peter Harmony (alias Ximenes) of Cadiz. The young gentleman appears to be well received by the family; makes frequent visits to "Silver Springs" and ruralizes and sylvanizes with Miss Mary about the glades and groves. He is a pleasant, good looking, good natured fellow, and, should [he] be given her hand I hope he may become a good protestant, a rich heir and an excellent husband; and that the Jones family in general, may be all the happier for having *Harmony* among them. Excuse the pleasantry.

Tomorrow I dine with Mr Henry Sheldon, who has a gentleman's party to meet old Mr Gallatin at present on a visit to him. . . . A few evenings since I set out alone on foot to pay a visit to the [Hamiltons]. I do not know what possessed me after all the experience I have had, to try a short cut across the fields, instead of going by the road or the aqueduct. Such a time as I had—our memorable expeditions through brake and bramble were nothing to it. I lost my way in ploughed grounds and cornfields; tumbled down a ravine; pulled down a stone wall on my heels and finished by jumping into the midst of a quickset hedge, set up by the illstarred Captain Rocket. I arrived at the Hamiltons' utterly kilt as an Irishman would say; but recovered sufficiently to pass a very pleasant evening. Mary played for me most charmingly. Bo sang his best and all the rest were as affable and agreeable as usual. In the course

of the evening Schuyler and Alexander Hamilton came straggling in from one of those fortuitous voyages incident to the family. They had come up in a steam ferry boat, just built by Schuyler and on a voyage of experiment; had been put ashore at some miles distance from the house, and reached there dusty, hungry but as usual in high spirits. The Dream has been fitted up anew this year and carries an immense press of canvas; but from some defect in her trim, disappoints them all in her sailing. I have not been on board of her. She bore down to the cottage in gallant style on the fourth of July; displayed all her colours and fired us a salute. There is quite a mania for yachts this season, and they are beautiful objects on the river. . . .

Ever affectionately your uncle

WASHINGTON IRVING

After the visit to Gouverneur Kemble, which Irving anticipates in his letter of July 11, he joined William E. West, the painter. Together they lingered at the home of Henry Brevoort, with whom Irving had been friends since boyhood. Irving's friendship with Brevoort was, perhaps, the most enduring of his life; and their letters to each other are an invaluable source of knowledge of Irving and of their times.

Honesdale, Saturday, July 31, 1841

My dear Sarah,

. . . I LEFT Cold Spring on Monday afternoon, in company with Mr Brevoort and Mr West for Mr

Saturday

Ames dale, July 31. 1841

My dear Sarah,

I wrote to you a few days since from the Highlands at Coldspring, giving you some account of our proceedings in the Highlands. I left Coldspring on Monday afternoon, in company with Mr Brevoort and Mr West, for Mr Brevoorts residence at the old Beverley House, about a couple of miles below Fishkill. It was a fine morning and we had a delightful drive through scenes which you will well recollect, [illegible] and which, on our first visit to the Highlands, made such a vivid impression on you. I thought of you (but absent I dont think of you!) as we crossed the Indian Brook; one of your favorite resorts: and I really had a sad twinge at the heart as we drove by the spot where, on our memorable expedition by land, I left you [illegible] by the road side, seated by the wreck of our waggon, when I went in quest of aid. I cannot tell you, my dear Sarah, how sweet yet sad these scenes and memorials of our past companionship are to me. They unconsciously make me feel how precious you were to me, and what I have lost in losing you.

After passing by the road leading from to the Fishkill we continued parallel to the river, though nearly a mile from it; with a range of wooded mountains on our left. The road ran through the property of Mr Anderson, and became grassy green, cut[illegible] occasionally by gates and bars, and shaded by magnificent trees: oaks and elms of immense size; with here and there a neglected avenue; speaking of former style but latter decay. It was almost dusk when we arrived at Beverley. It is an irregular old mansion; part of it intended as a palatial residence, & the rest a mere farm house. It has never had any pretension to architectural merit; though the [illegible] wainscots, tiled chimney pieces, & some of the rooms have been [illegible] of respectability and spaciousness. The chief interest about it is, it having been the house at which occurred the [illegible] between Andre, and [illegible] that his treason was discovered, and from which he made his [illegible] escape. We drank tea in the old room, with low ceiling and beams overhead, in which Arnold was at breakfast when the letter was delivered him; and the foot path is still shown, by which he escaped through the woods to the river side. The Mansion is in a very lonely situation, just at the foot of the mountains, and out of sight of the river; and out of the way of travel. The Brevoorts have only furnished it in a very simple style; they have their harp and piano and plenty of books; their living under the hills, and around are perfectly [illegible] with their rural retreat. They really are quite the kind of people to enjoy the country; living very much out of doors; rambling about the woods and fields, and casting off all the [illegible] of city life. I was quite

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER OF WASHINGTON IRVING
TO HIS NIECE.

Brevoort's residence at the old Beverley House, about a couple of miles below Mr Gouverneur's. It was a fine evening and we had a delightful drive through scenes which you will well recollect, and which, on our first visit to the Highlands, made such a vivid impression on you. I thought of you (but when do I not think of you!) as we crossed the Indian Brook; one of your favorite resorts: and I really had a sad twinge at the heart as we drove by the spot where, on our memorable expedition by land, I left you by the road side, seated by the wreck of our waggon, when I went in quest of aid. I cannot tell you, my dear Sarah, how sweet yet sad these scenes and memorials of our past companionship are to me. They constantly make me feel how precious you were to me, and what I have lost in losing you.

After passing by the road leading down to Mr Gouverneur's we continued parallel to the view, though nearly a mile from it; with a range of woody mountains on our left. The road ran through the property of Mr Arden, and became grass grown, crossed occasionally by gates and bars, and shaded by magnificent trees: oaks and elms of immense size; with here and there a neglected avenue; speaking of former style but latter decay. It was about dusk when we arrived at Beverley. It is an irregular old mansion; part of it intended as a polite residence, the rest a mere farm house. It has never had any pretension, to architectural merit; though the pannel'd wainscots, tiled chimney pieces, in some of the rooms have an air of respectability and quaintness.

The chief interest about it is, its having been the house at which Arnold received the letter from André, apprising him that his treason was discovered, and from which he made his hairbreadth escape. We drank tea in an old room, with low ceiling and beams overhead, in which Arnold was at breakfast when the letter was delivered him; and the foot path is still shewn, by which he escaped through the woods to the river side. The old mansion is in a very lonely situation, just at the foot of the mountains, out of sight of the river; and out of the way of travel. The Brevoorts have half furnished it, in a very simple style; they have their harp and piano and plenty of books; their swing under lofty trees &c, and are perfectly enchanted with their rural retreat. They really are quite the kind of people to enjoy the country; living very much out of doors; rambling about the woods and fields, and casting off all the commonplace of city life. I was quite sorry that I could not pass a few days with them in this old haunt of treason; but Brevoort and myself had arranged to set off the following morning on our expedition up the river to meet the Directors of the Delaware & Hudson Canal company. Our evening was very pleasant. Mrs Brevoort and Laura gave us some excellent music and we had some very agreeable conversation. The next morning, leaving Mr West in charge of the family, Mr Brevoort and myself crossed the river to West Point and there got on board of an Albany Steamboat, which after a very fine sail up the river landed us at Kingston. By

some mistake we arrived at the place of rendezvous three or four hours after the Directors had set off in the canal boat so we had to get a carriage and endeavour to overtake them. The object of their expedition was an annual visit along the line of the canal and to the coal mines among the mountains. We had a splendid drive of twenty five miles through glorious mountain scenery: the Catskill Mountains on the North, the Shawangunk Mountains on the South, and a beautiful wild river the Rondout winding through a romantic valley equal to the Ramapough. It was after dark before we overtook the canal boat, where we were most cordially welcomed by the Directors, among whom was Mr Philip Hone. The canal boat was fitted up with every convenience & well supplied with *provant* for the expedition: we accordingly had a very social and merry time of it: one night we slept on board, and twice on shore: but the scenery through which we passed was beyond my most sanguine anticipations. You remember the glorious variety of mountain, and forest, and deep rich valley and shining rivers, which we traversed on our memorable return from the Western part of the state. Fancy a succession of such scenery for upward of a hundred miles. For a great part of the way we tracked the course of the Rondout: then the Delaware; then the Lackawaxen &c. The canal truly was like a beautiful winding river: but at times it was for many miles, built along the face of perpendicular rocky cliffs; with great precipices beetling over head, with immense trees

growing out of every fissure, while far below, at the foot of an artificial wall, roared along the Delaware. I think I never in my life have been more impressed with natural scenery; probably from its being so unexpected:—and then the stupendous works of art I was contemplating—this daring enterprize of building such an immense watry high way along perpendicular mountains and through the heart of an almost impracticable wilderness. We reached this place yesterday morning. It is the great coal deposit; whither the coal is brought from the mines (16 miles distant) in cars along a railroad and whence it is transported in the canal boats. The place is new but very bustling, and promises to rise to importance. It is well laid out and prettily built, and is named after Philip Hone who has been one of the most efficient persons in promoting this great enterprize. What I have continually felt throughout this journey was the want of some companion to whom I could express my delight, and who could sympathize in my impressions. My fellow travellers were all men of business: with the exception of Brevoort, who was unusually obtuse, and Hone, who was in general too much taken up with himself. But I have been spoiled of late years by having you so much with me in my excursions after the picturesque, and accustoming myself to turn to you on all occasions when I wanted some one to help me to enjoy a landscape.

Saturday August 1. We have been overtaken by an easterly storm and have to postpone our expedition by rail road to the coal mines until tomorrow.

What a contrast between the Sunday I am passing at this place and that which you are contemplating at Paris. Here it is literally a day of rest. A mere repose from labor; a universal stillness, but an absence of all enjoyment. Nothing can be more dull and monotonous than a Sunday in one of these little, commonplace, orderly country towns. I have been to a commonplace little church of white boards, and seen a congregation of commonplace people and heard a commonplace sermon, and now cannot muster up anything but commonplace ideas; so that I will forbear writing any more for the present. Good lord deliver me from the all pervading commonplace which is the curse of our country. It is like the sands of the desert, which are continually stealing over the land of Egypt and gradually effacing every trace of grandeur and beauty and swallowing up every green thing. I must confess I envied you your half wicked Parisian Sunday; at church in the morning and at S'Cloud in the afternoon.

Aug. 3. Carbondale. If I have wished for you repeatedly on former parts of my route I have been well satisfied you were not with me on the journey from Honesdale to this place, and yet it has been one of the most striking and interesting parts of the whole expedition; we have come entirely by rail road, in rough cars or boxes, made for the transportation of coal, fitted up with rude benches, with buffalo skins thrown over them. We were drawn by horses, but came at the rate of little more than two miles an hour. . . .

We have now got through with our examination of the various parts of this great mining enterprise, and this afternoon we turn our faces homeward. This evening we shall reach Honesdale; thence we take an extra stage to Goshen, and thence I shall shape my course either by Newburgh to the Highlands; or by the rail road to Tappan, and so to the cottage. I long to get back to little Sunnyside, from whence my absence has been most unexpectedly prolonged by this wild expedition, and from whence I have heard nothing since my departure and shall hear nothing until my return. I find the Great Western has arrived. There are therefore letters from you, to some of the family if not to myself. . . .

New York, Aug 6th—We left Carbondale on the afternoon of the 3d and had a fine drive through the mountains to Honesdale, where we were warmly welcomed. Indeed I was quite surprised by the cordial attention I experienced in these villages in the wilderness, and by a compliment that had been paid me during my absence. On Sunday afternoon I had rambled with some of my fellow travellers to the summit of a peculiar and very picturesque cliff on the crest of a woody height, that overlooks the pretty village of Honesdale and its romantic valley; and had returned home by a beautiful walk along the foot of the mountains, overhung with rocks and trees, with thickets of Kalmias, Rhododendrons &c and a wild little river babbling along, and dividing it from the village. It was a perfect green alley carpeted with verdure, one of the most delightful walks

I had ever seen in the vicinity of a village. Several of the young people of the village were taking their Sunday's stroll in it. I expressed my hope that so charming a promenade might never be laid desolate by the hand of improvement but might be kept up as a public resort and suggested that it might be called [Ladywood?] lane; to secure for it the all potent protection of the ladies. On our return from Carbondale, the two rival newspapers of Honesdale were [put into?] my hand, in which I found my sojourn in the village mentioned at large, my visit to the cliff etc. and that the latter had been named Irving's cliff in memorial of my visit, and the beautiful green alley had received the name of Ladywood lane—I furthermore heard before my departure that in the course of the week the ladies were to have a rural fête in the lane by way of conferring on it its name in style. . . .

And now my dear Girl I must conclude this rambling letter which, for the most part is about scenes in the wilderness, which will not interest you so much as home scenes: but I could not help still taking you with me on my travels. . . .

Your affectionate uncle

WASHINGTON IRVING

For the visit to Honesdale Irving paid heavily in illness. On the last day of his excursion he sat outside beside the driver, to see the mountain scenery. The exposure in the hot sun, after other fatigues, it was thought, caused a severe fever.

Sunnyside Cottage, Sept. 1, 1841

My dear Sarah,

. . . During an early stage of my illness I received your long delightful letter written at different dates; the last the 31st July. Your animated descriptions of the fêtes of Paris, and of your excursions to places in the vicinity bring up the most pleasing recollections. I am continually gratified to find how much we coincide in our impressions of scenes and places; and how much we are struck and pleased with the same circumstances. I agree with you as to the view from the terrace at S'Germain—it is vast diversified and noble, but by no means so beautiful as that from Richmond. Meudon was a favorite resort of mine when I sojourned part of one summer at the village of Auteuil. I used to stroll there on foot and from thence to S'Cloud. The prospect from the terrace at Meudon is indeed superb. The village of Meudon was classic ground to me having been the residence of Rabelais an old French writer of admirable wit and humor, though too gross and obscene for female perusal.

Sept. 2d. Has your mother given you an account of the maritime invasion of the cottage by that crack brained navigator Capt. Fatio? You no doubt recollect this odd genius: and his tour through the country as a strolling lecturer. It seems [the] government has given him the command of a revenue cutter, and he is a complete beggar on horseback. His first move was to take himself a wife; whom he

married at Washington, rather a pleasing genteel looking person, whom he presents as Mrs America Fatio. She for the present presides over the cabin of the cutter, the Captain treating her to a cruise during the Honey Moon. In the course of this matrimonial cruise he came up into the waters of the Tappan Sea; intending to proceed up to West Point, make a grand flourish and fire a salute for the military academy. His swaggering cruise was suddenly checked by orders which overtook him to return to New York. He anchored off Tarrytown; visited Eliza, invited her and several others to a breakfast on board of the cutter and sent me an invitation to the same effect. A freak of bad weather prevented his fête and I hoped we were rid of him; but lo, in the afternoon he appeared off the cottage; dropped anchor, displayed his colours and fired a salute. A couple of boats were then manned for shore, in one of which came the captain, inviting us all to tea with Mrs America Fatio. Fred and Philip Paulding and Irving Van Wart were on board. There was no such thing as parrying the Captain's importunities; and as I thought a visit on board the cutter might be curious and amusing to the girls I took Kate and Julia with me. Such a time as we had with the overpowering civilities and the perpetual fuss of the Captain. His wife was well bred and pleasing enough but the Captain hardly gave her an opportunity to say a word. He was interfering in every thing and bothering every body with his commands from the sailors on the rigging to the poor devil who

waited on table. And then such an arrant drawer of the long bow; such stories about his exploits; and such a gross hyperbolical flatterer. The malady which was to pull me down was working in my veins; I was nervous and impatient; and in this state had for three mortal hours to endure the incessant palaver and overpowering blarney of this poetical vagabond. I was several times tempted to jump overboard and swim ashore or be drowned. To finish our entertainment in style, just as we made a move to depart the music of the Cutter, a cursed drum and fife, struck up and for half an hour played a variety of tunes enough to drive one mad. The Captain was vain of his drummer; he was a chimney sweep he had picked up in the streets and meant to make a first rate musician of him. I wished the Captain were up the chimney and the drummer sweep at the bottom; to drum there to all eternity. We got ashore between nine and ten o'clock: the Captain and his drum haunted my dreams all night and I believe this nautical regale contributed to hurry me into a fever. The Captain weighed anchor the next morning—he is destined to cruise on the Florida coast. I hope [the] government will keep him there and that we may never see his flag again in the Tappan Sea.

Sept. 3. The weather continues bright and beautiful. I presume your mother gives you an account of the visitors at the cottage. They have been numerous during my illness; and have been very kind in their enquiries. . . .

Farewell my dear Sarah; give my kind remembrance to Mr. Storrow.

Ever your affectionate uncle

WASHINGTON IRVING

New York, Sept. 23d 1841

My dear Sarah,

. . . SINCE I wrote to you last I have quite recovered my health, and almost entirely my strength, and have again been able to make excursions and attend the social gatherings of our neighborhood. . . .

I am scrawling this hasty line at your uncle's country [torn away] and in a great hurry—It is a mere apology for a letter—I will write a longer one at a quieter moment. Yesterday there was a grand opening of the Hudson and Erie rail road, from the great Pier opposite the cottage to Goshen—a distance of about 45 miles. I was invited to attend, and crossed in my boat from the cottage to the Pier head. About ½ past ten in the morning a steam boat arrived from New York, laden with invited guests—about 500. It seemed as if every gentleman that I knew in New York was there. We started forthwith in the cars; which are spacious and convenient, and had a splendid drive through the valley of the Ramapo, and a succession of that Romantic scenery through which you and I passed on our delightful tour from the Highlands to Hoboken—at Goshen there was all the country assembled; and one of the most enormous dinners I ever was present at—tables

being spread in temporary buildings, and in the Rail road Hotel—We returned on the cars in the evening and I continued down to New York in the steam boat, and am scribbling this letter with all the irritation of nerves consequent to such an expedition and such a tumultuous festival. Which I give as an excuse for this letter, not being much longer and much better

Remember me affectionately to Mr Storrow
ever my dear Sarah your affectionate uncle

W. I.

New York, Oct. 3d 1841

My dear Sarah,

I HAVE been passing a few days partly in town on business and partly at Mr Astor's, and am writing this, on a rainy Sunday morning, at Mr Grinnell's. The evening before last I was at Mrs Frederick Rhinelander's: it was a delightful visit, though it brought up many half melancholy recollections of former times, and of visits that we have made there together. You were spoken of repeatedly, in the kindest and most affectionate terms; but it is needless for me to dwell on this visit as it is probable this letter will be delivered to you by Mary Rhinelander (Mrs King) herself, who sails for Havre in the packet of the 8th inst. What a joyful meeting you will have with this warm hearted generous spirited little being. I think you will like her husband also, who appears to be frank, manly and amiable. Our

little friend Posey, whom you may recollect with her blooming cheeks and pink ribbons, has grown up into a lovely girl; as fresh, as sweet and artless as ever; with a stock of natural, unassisted beauty, that would furnish a capital for half a dozen Parisian belles.

I was at a little evening party at Mrs Constant's, a few days before I left the country. She is looking very lovely, and her general health is much improved. I trust her tour in Europe will effectually restore it. When last I saw him Mr Constant was in doubt whether to sail in the Havre Packet of the 25th of this month, or to wait and sail with Captain Funk on the 1st of November. The worthy little captain is a great favorite with both Mr & Mrs Constant.

You will soon have a little home circle of friends forming around you, and will cease to feel lonely and a stranger in Paris. . . .

I saw yesterday little Abby for the first time since her return, looking fresh as a rose and plump as a little partridge. She gave me many very interesting particulars about you, and spoke with delight of her sojourn at Paris, which she would be rejoiced to revisit. She and her mother are in town taking care of old Mr Furman who is ill of an intermittent fever, but on the recovery. She tells me that you confidently expect me at Paris this autumn, and some of your letters intimate the same expectation. My dear Girl *it is out of the question*. I cannot consult my own wishes in this matter. I must stay at home and

endeavor to take care of those about me. Mr Van Wart has signified to your uncle E. I. that his agency must come to a close. This leaves him for the present without any means of support; and what new mode he is to devise at his time of life and with his infirmities, it is difficult to imagine. How I shall be able to keep all afloat with my cramped and diminished means, and with debts incurred on behalf of others hanging over and threatening me is an equally harrassing question. These things break my rest and disturb my waking thoughts; they haunted me sadly during my illness. However, as poor Scott said, "I have a good deal of work in me yet." If I can but fairly get my pen under way I may make affairs wear a different aspect: but these cares and troubles bear hard upon the capability of a literary man "who has but his good spirits to feed and clothe him." The Doctor who attended upon me in my illness and who was curious in studying my constitution, said "I had a large heart that acted powerfully on my system." God knows I have need of a stout heart at times, but I certainly have always found it rally up to the charge in time of danger or difficulty. On that I will still rely.

I am writing a brief and uncomfortable letter; but my mind is so much ocupied just now by a variety of matters that I have no mood nor time for cheerful gossip. I will soon write to you again and I trust in a brighter vein.

Remember me kindly to Mr. Storrow

Your affectionate uncle,

W. I.

New York, Dec. 1, 1841.

My dear Sarah

. . . I AM passing a few days in town at Mr Astor's, having brought Julia & Mary on a visit to Julia Grinnell's. . . .

The town has been running mad (or foolish) about two or three distinguished visitors: the Prince de Joinville, Lord Morpeth &c &c. and there has been nothing but public dinners, balls, routs &c &c. As yet I have steered clear of them all but today I am to meet Lord Morpeth at dinner at Mrs Hone's, and in the evening at a ball at Mrs Mary Jones'. By the way, there has arisen a terrible feud in the crambo fashionable world of New York, between Mrs Mary Jones and Mrs Doctor Mott, in consequence of Mrs Doctor Mott omitting to invite Mrs Mary Jones and Miss Mary Jones to a ball which Mrs Doctor Mott gave to the Prince de Joinville and at which all the fashionable world was present. Mrs Doctor Mott did it avowedly in revenge of some "airs" which she said Mrs Mary Jones and Miss Mary Jones gave themselves towards herself and her daughter on divers occasions. Mrs Mary Jones and Miss Mary Jones have been eloquent in assuring the whole world how little they cared for Mrs and Miss Doctor Mott and their party, and to prove it, are this evening to give a ball to the whole world to which Mrs and Miss Doctor Mott will be most particularly uninvited. I cannot but observe, however, that in this momentous affair Mrs Doctor

Mott has shewn herself a great general. She has for some time past been endeavoring to get a stand in the fashionable world, with but limited success but this double achievement of having the Prince de Joinville at the ball, and cutting Mrs Mary Jones and Miss Mary Jones has established her house forever. I am told now wherever she goes she is pointed out as the lady who cut Mrs Mary and Miss Mary Jones, whereupon every body begs to have the honor of being introduced to her.

You ask me in one of your letters whether I received the one containing a copy of a note from my excellent friend Rogers. I did so and read it with heart full of affection towards him for his delicate attention to you. I can assure you of a most kind reception from him when you revisit England. . . .

Your mother is looking extremely well and appears to enjoy her residence in town. She is in the midst of her connexions, and has visits in the course of the day which serve to enliven and amuse her. Upon the whole I now think her coming to town a good move. She will pass her time more cheerfully than in the confinement of a winter residence in the country and will doubly enjoy the cottage, returning to it in the time of the birds and flowers.

Give my kindest remembrances to Mr Storrow— as well as to Mrs Constant and Mrs King, who I trust are with you at present.

Your affectionate uncle

W. I.

P. S. I ought to have told you that the ball at Mrs Mary Jones' was very choice and brilliant. Lord Morpeth and several distinguished strangers were there, but not the Prince de Joinville, who had sailed. Julia & Mary made their appearance there and looked very well and enjoyed themselves. Mrs Doctor Mott & Miss Doctor Mott were not invited.

LETTERS
FROM SPAIN 1842-1845

MADRID

WASHINGTON IRVING began his residence in Madrid as American Minister to Spain in July, 1842. In his personal letters of this year he set down characteristically his distaste for society and the pageantry of courts. Yet, because he was a born observer of such scenes his correspondence during the next four years proved to be a series of informal, vivid essays on the Spain of Espartero, Maria Christina, and Isabella the Second. His official position, in which Irving displayed a marked practical capacity, was also a romantic culmination. At sixty he beheld again the country which had charmed his earlier years. Then he had been writing *The Alhambra* and idling with the young Russian prince, Dolgorouki, and with David Wilkie. Now he was full of honors, and definitely older, as a striking personal passage in these letters shows. Nevertheless, he is still under the spell of kings and queens as much as in his first wanderings in the Europe of 1804-06. He can penetrate intrigue as shrewdly as in his *Conquest of Granada* or the *Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*. The diplomatic correspondence of Irving to his government attests his comprehension of this tangle of European hatreds and hypocrisies. This is evident, too, in other letters of the period, but those here reproduced indicate rather that mood of ro-

mantic appreciation towards the ceremonial of old Europe, so characteristic of the America which Washington Irving, disciple of Walter Scott, never outgrew. In these letters to his sister, and to his favorite niece, Sarah Storrow, he opens the colorful book of Madrid as if reading aloud to them at Sunnyside. His despatches to the Secretary of State are quite another thing; but here he is writing affectionately to those less fortunate than himself, who have never seen the land of Ferdinand and Boabdil. To Irving "the little Queen," who is the central figure in these rich pictures, is the romance of ancient Spain.

"The little Queen" had indeed (though at the time of Irving's first letter she was only twelve years old) already been the centre of events as romantic as those of Granada. At the death of her father, Ferdinand the Seventh, she had been proclaimed Isabella the Second, under the regency of her mother, Maria Christina, sister of the King of Naples and niece of the Queen of France. Ten years must pass before by the Spanish law she could ascend the throne, but between 1833 and 1840 had occurred the rebellion under Don Carlos, the intrigues of the queen mother with France and against the liberties of her people, her abdication from Spain, as well as minor counter-revolutions. Towards the end of the regency, the queen mother's chief opponent, and the champion of the liberals, was Espartero, a soldier of unusual force and integrity. He now re-conducted Isabella and her sister, two years younger, to the palace where they were acclaimed by the people. Espartero became regent. Irving in the first of these letters describes his domestic establishment at Madrid and in the fourth he alludes to one of the frequent insurrections in Barcelona, but his real interest, as will at once be seen, is in the drama in which Isabella is the chief actress.

Madrid, Friday Aug. 12th 1842

My dear Sarah,

I WROTE you a brief letter last week, enclosing others for your perusal addressed to your mother & to Mary Irving. This pacquet ought to have gone by the courier of the French Embassy, last Saturday, but was sent to the office too late, it will reach you therefore at the same time with this letter, which goes by the courier of tomorrow. I have just received your letter from S'Germain (no date) acknowledging the receipt of my first letter from Madrid; and giving me an account of your having witnessed the funeral of the Duke of Orleans; and met with the Jones Family. . . .

I have little to add about affairs in Madrid in addition to what you will find in the letters written last week. The warm weather which still prevails keeps me very much at home, excepting when I have to make or return visits of ceremony. By keeping my windows closed, and having thick walls between me and the sun, and spacious apartments, I pass the day comfortably enough; and sometimes do not go out even in the evening; excepting it is to pay a visit in the other wing of this great mansion, to my fair neighbor & country woman Madame Albuquerque, whom I find extremely amiable and conversible. Today we all drive with Mr Albuquerque, and shall meet at his table some of the diplomatic corps, and some of the court dignitaries. As I have no horses yet, and it is rather a long warm walk from my resi-

dence through the town to the public walk of the Prado, I sometimes about sun set, take an airing on the public parade or terrace in front of the Royal palace, which is not far distant from my dwelling. . . .

I am looking anxiously for the arrival of my packages from Paris containing my china ware, linen &c &c. that I may complete my establishment; having to make shift for the present by hiring various articles for household use. I am desirous also for the arrival of my books and papers; that I may resume my literary avocations and turn my abundant leisure to account.

Yesterday I had a visit from Mr Aston the British Minister, who has just returned from a visit to La Granja. He was extremely friendly and off hand in his manner and I think we will become very sociable.

Among my various visitors was Senor Escalente, one of the principal officers of Government, a very agreeable accomplished man who among his various offices has been Governor of Granada. He expressed himself very handsomely about my writings respecting that city, and told me he was in England when my "Alhambra" was published, and that he had translated parts of it as an exercise. Indeed I find that little work continually acting as a passport for me to the good graces of the Spaniards. . . .

Your affectionate uncle

WASHINGTON IRVING

Madrid Nov. 20th 1842

My dear Sister,

... And now that I have had a second interview with the little Queen you will want to know more about her when seen near at hand. I must tell you then that my whole impression is of a more cheerful kind than at my first audience. I then passed through twilight halls and shadowy silent saloons; with the vivid idea, fresh in my mind, of the violent scenes that had recently taken place there, menacing the safety of these innocent helpless children—I found the little Queen clad in mourning, which added to the surrounding gloom, seemed characteristic of her fortunes. Now the palace was enlivened by cheerful day light, and the saloons had resumed their regal splendor. The little Queen too was clad in white and no longer looked like a mere shadow of royalty. But—to be particular—she is well grown for her years: and well formed inclining to fullness rather than the contrary: with extremely well shaped arms. Her countenance, though not handsome, is agreeable; she has light hair and light eyes; which are somewhat unusual in Spain. Her general health I should think from her appearance to be excellent; but she is unfortunately troubled with a complaint of the skin which gives it a rough and somewhat *mealy* look. In consequence of neglect on the part of her mother it was suffered to confirm itself and become obstinate. It is probable however, that with the assistance of baths which she now takes

frequently, she will out grow it. She will then become quite what is called "personable." Her sister has dark hair and dark eyes; and, though it is said she has lost her colour and much of her good looks within the last year, she is quite pretty. I think she will grow up very handsome. She is said to be of a sprightlier turn than the Queen; but the latter, if she begins to think for herself, and to cast a thoughtful eye upon the past, the present and the future, has enough to give a grave cast to her character. . . .

With love to all

Your affectionate brother

WASHINGTON IRVING

Madrid—Dec^{r} 10th 1842.

My dear Sister,

. . . I'LL give you a word or two about your little friend the Queen in whom you take such great interest. A few days since the Corps diplomatique received invitations to attend an evening anniversary meeting of the Liceo, a numerous and fashionable society instituted for the cultivation of literature and the fine arts, on which occasion gold medals and other prizes were to be distributed by the Queen to such as had excelled in the various departments. The meeting was held in an immense and lofty saloon in what was formerly a ducal palace: at one end of which is fitted up a very pretty stage with scenic decorations, where the members of the Liceo have amateur theatricals. The saloon was crowded on our

arrival with a brilliant assemblage of both sexes. Seats were reserved for the Diplomatic Corps, immediately in front of the stage, while on their left, and on the right of the stage was a raised dais richly carpeted, with two chairs of state, forming a kind of throne for the Queen and her sister.

After some time the arrival of the little sovereign was announced, and every body rose; the ladies mounted on chairs and benches to get a fair view of royalty, and many a beautiful Spanish face with dark flashing eyes was to be seen peering anxiously over the heads of the crowd. The little Queen and her sister attended by their Aya or governess, Madame Mina, and one or two ladies and officers of the royal household, and escorted by a few of the faithful halberdiers advanced along a passage left in the centre of the saloon, saluting the company to the right and left in very gracious style. They then ascended the dais, took their seats in the chairs of state while a halberdier with his musket, stood posted like a statue on each side. The distribution of the prizes was a very pretty ceremony. The Duke of Ossuna richest grandee and greatest Dandy in Spain, and really a tall elegant man about thirty years of age, officiated as master of ceremonies, being president of the Lyceo. He placed in her Majestys hands the prize to be distributed; the person to receive it, in two instances a young lady, was conducted up to the foot of the throne. After receiving the prize the candidate kneeled and kissed the Queen's hand, and then took a seat with the other successful candidates

on the left hand side of the stage immediately opposite to the throne. After the prizes had been distributed we had some vocal and instrumental music from amateurs members of the Society: and the evening's entertainment concluded with a sprightly comedy admirably played by amateurs. The little Queen and her sister conducted themselves with great grace and decorum, not laughing more than it was becoming for a queen and a princess royal to laugh, yet evidently enjoying the whole scene mightily. During the last act of the comedy however her little majesty began to yawn behind her fan, and to shew evident signs that it was past her usual bed time; whereupon the actors hurried forward with their parts with such rapid volubility that I could scarcely understand a word. The curtain fell. Her majesty rose, bowed gracefully to the assemblage and then retired; nodding graciously to the right and left as she passed. I saw her and her sister mount into their carriage amid a blaze of torch light and whirl off followed by a clattering and glittering troop of horse. . . .

We are now getting on towards the middle of December, but as yet we have had no appearance of ice; there has been occasionally a hoar frost in the morning on the roofs of the houses; but the days are generally bright and sunny; the fields are all green, and the weather has often the soft balmy feeling of Spring. For my own part I never suffer from cold here, and if it were not for two or three roasting months of midsummer I should have nothing to say

against the climate. There is a purity and lightness in the atmosphere quite exhilerating, and I find it a climate in which I can go through a vast deal of close mental application without weariness of mind or body. . . .

Your affectionate brother
WASHINGTON IRVING

Madrid Dec^{r} 12th 1842

My dear Sarah,

. . . You must not take all for granted that you see in French papers about Spanish affairs. Many of the articles that appear in them are extracted from the opposition papers of Madrid, which paint every public event in the blackest colours and endeavor to throw odium upon the Regent and the Ministers and doubt upon the stability of the present government. The French government too is unfriendly to the constitutional government of Spain, and would gladly see a change even though it should cost the country another civil war. Indeed the recent insurrection in Barcelona has been ascribed to French agency and the secret subsidies of Maria Christina, though I no more believe this, than the opposite assertion which ascribes it to the intrigues of England to destroy the cotton fabrics of Catalonia! England and France are political rivals for the ascendancy in Spain, and the Peninsula is their political chess board; let us trust, however, that they both play an honorable game. Still this will account to

you for the exaggerated tone in which every popular disturbance in Spain is spoken of in the French Ministerial papers.

The insurrection in Barcelona has been bad enough, there is no doubt, and it has been put down in a lamentably destructive manner: but the quiet that has been maintained throughout the rest of Spain shews that it was a local out break: and that the government is more firmly seated than its enemies had supposed. During this period of popular anxiety Madrid has remained tranquil under the guardianship of its national guard, and every thing goes on as usual. Should there ever really be a popular commotion here you need not fear for my personal safety. There could be no cause of hostility to me; I am not one who goes abroad in riotous times in quest of adventures; and the house of a diplomatic representative is sacred even from the intrusion of the authorities; while the national arms above the portal are respected even by the rabble.

You will hear and read a great deal against the Regent Espartero, concerning this affair of Barcelona and concerning his conduct generally in the management of the national affairs. As far as I have had an opportunity of judging of him he is an open, frank well meaning man, more of the soldier than the statesman; but sincerely disposed to uphold the present constitution; to protect the throne of the little Queen, and to give up the reins of government into her hands when her minority is finished. He has a difficult part however to play. . . .

I am scribbling this in the midst of a little domestic hubbub, as I am going to give a dinner today to some of my diplomatic associates: especially those of the British legation; as I am deeply in arrears to Mr Aston who is continually inviting me to his house, and who in fact is most frank & cordial on all occasions. To cope with him however is out of the question; besides his ample salary he has a large private fortune and can afford to keep open table. . . .

I have received a letter this evening by a Packet ship, from your uncle E.I. [Ebenezer Irving] dated Nov. 6. but yours from your Mother by the Great Western must be later. I thank you for your extract from it. Your dear mother is repeatedly expressing concern in her letters about my having such a heavy family to take care of. She ought to know that it is this which spurs me on to cheerful activity of mind and body and gives an interest to existence. Had I only myself to take care of I should become as inert, querulous and good for nothing as other old bachelors who only live for themselves, and should soon become weary of life, as indeed I have been now and then when everything went smooth with me and I had only to think of my own enjoyment: but I have never felt such real interest in existence, and so desirous to live on, as of late years, since my life has become important to others: and I have never felt in such good humor with myself as since I have begun to consider myself a '*pere de famille.*' God knows I have no great idea of bachelor hood and am not one of the fraternity through choice—but provi-

dence has some how or other thwarted the warm wishes of my heart and the tendencies of my nature in those earlier seasons of life when tender and happy unions are made; and has protected me in those more advanced periods when matrimonial unions are apt to be unsuited or ungenial; but I have often repined at my single state and have looked forward with doubt and solicitude to the possibility of an old age solitary, uncherished and unloved. Thank God: I now feel differently. The years I have recently passed at home, and especially at my blessed little cottage, in the bosom of a family: with young hearts growing up round me and clinging to me, make me confident that there are those who will cling tenderly to me to the last, and bear kindly with me, even when I may cease to be almost any thing but a burthen. When I think of the affection lavished upon me by my kindred, I am but too happy to do any thing in my power to prove how deeply I feel and how heartily I return their love.

But I must conclude, for the magisterial Benjamin claims the very table on which I am writing to convert it into a sideboard.

Give my kind regards to Mr Storrow and many kisses to little Miss Kate and her doll.

your affectionate uncle

WASHINGTON IRVING

Early in August, 1843, occurred a typical revolution of this period in Spanish history, and Espartero was driven out. The more conservative party that now came into power

desired the Queen to ascend the throne at once, without an intervening regency. The scene in the Royal Chapel, described in Irving's next letter, depicts Isabella presiding at a religious ceremony in honor of the "recent events."

Madrid Aug 25th 1843.

My dear Sister,

In compliance with your republican taste for royalty I proceed to give you another peep into the palace, and a view of the little Queen in her present state of (perhaps transitory!) splendor. Some days since notice was sent to the different members of the court, the corps diplomatic &c that a grand religious ceremony would take place in the chapel of the royal palace where high mass would be performed with pontifical state and solemnity, by the Cardinal, Patriarch of the Indias, after which a grand Te Deum would be chanted in honor of the recent events. On this occasion her Majesty was to attend seated in state on a throne; a circumstance which had not occured at any ceremony of the kind since the time of Isabella of glorious memory, no queen having swayed the sceptre of Spain in her own right since that time.

On the day appointed the palace was thronged with civil military and religious functionaries all in grand costume. I took up the Minister of Brazil and his secretary on my way to the palace, and we were set down at the foot of the great marble staircase so often mentioned to you. It was again thronged with courtiers in their embroidered dresses, hastening to

pay their devotions to the throne rather than to the altar. We passed up the splendid stair case and along a glazed gallery surrounding the great interior court of the palace; a kind of alley being formed by two rows of halberdiers all in new uniforms. The chapel is in the back part of the palace. It is of Octagon form, with lofty arches and alcoves; sumptuously gilded, and the high altar and the cielings decorated with fine paintings. The chapel was already crowded. Benches had been placed for the official characters, religious, civil and military, who were for the most part in their places: there was a great throng of ladies, who, however, not being on court duty, but mere spectators were generally arrayed in black, with veils or mantillas attached to the back of their heads: the usual dress of ladies on attending mass. In the lofty recesses of the arches were small galleries, or rather windows low and long, looking down into the chapel, and sufficient to accommodate several spectators. All these were thronged with heads mostly of youthful persons, females of the royal household and their friends & relatives; eagerly gazing down upon the splendid scene. Notwithstanding the brilliant day light that glanced through, and was reflected by the gilded arches, the grand altar was lighted up by waxen tapers of great size. The dignitaries of the church were seated on each side of it. At a little distance on the right of the altar was the throne prepared for the youthful Isabella. It consisted of a sumptuous chair of state, elevated on a platform covered with a rich carpet; and under a

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On the day appointed the palace was thronged with civil military and religious functionaries all in grand costume. I took up the Minister of Brazil and his secretary on my way to the palace, and we were set down at the foot of the great marble staircase so often mentioned to you. It was again thronged with courtiers in their embroidered dresses, hastening to pay their devotions to the throne rather than to the altar. We passed up the splendid staircase and along a glazed gallery surrounding the great interior court of the palace; a kind of alley being formed by two rows of halberdiers all in new uniforms. The chapel is in the back part of the palace. It is of octagon form, with lofty arches and cloisters, sumptuously gilded, and the high altar and the ceilings decorated with fine paintings. The chapel was already crowded. Much had been

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER OF WASHINGTON IRVING
TO HIS SISTER.

lofty canopy of damask, on which, behind the royal chair, were wrought the arms of Spain. On the same platform, a little to the left of the chair and between it and the grand altar, facing the latter, was the royal *prie Dieu* or praying desk, covered with a mantle of damask, with a damask cushion for the Queen to kneel on, whenever the sacred ceremonies required genuflexion. Fortunately a front bench facing the throne was assigned to the diplomatic corps, and as I happened to be at the head of the corps on that occasion, I was seated almost immediately opposite to the queen, which enables me to gratify you with this minute description.

For a while all was suspense; the seats still vacant kept gradually filling up; and the throng of ladies, crowded in recesses, now and then grew rather insurrectional; taking possession of benches reserved for personages of the court and attendants upon the queen whence they were with some difficulty ejected by officials appointed to keep order. During this time I amused myself with scanning the magnificent scene; with noticing the pretty and picturesque young female heads, peeping down from the galleries and windows; with admiring the dark flashing eyes of some of the ladies in veils and mantillas and the restless movement of their fans so expressive of their own restless and excitable spirits; while not a little amusement did I derive from the crowd of veteran courtiers, in court dresses that had weathered many a political storm in this revolutionary country, and which, like their owners, were much the

worse for wear. In fact men are so often turned in and turned out of office by the frequent and sudden changes in this government, that they and their coats are worn threadbare and limber as rags. Scarce a man about court, I might almost say about the streets, but has been, or is, or expects to be a cabinet minister or other high functionary; and I am careful now to pull off my hat to every dabbler in politics, however shabby his looks or low his condition, as I do not know but by a sudden turn of the wheel, I may have to treat with him about affairs of State. I was at a private concert last winter at which were present the Duchess of Victoria* and several persons high in office. A foreigner, long resident in Madrid, was speaking of the political reverses to which this country is subject. You see these persons here present, said he, who appear firmly seated in power and popularity; nothing is more uncertain than their position. On a sudden you may find them fugitives beyond the Pyrenees; and their places occupied by persons now in exile—I smiled at the suggestion. Scarce six months have elapsed and it has come to pass!—but I am forgetting the royal chapel.

There was the swell of military music from the great court of the palace; a bustle was heard in the gallery; the folding doors of the chapel were thrown open and the queen was announced. She was preceded by officers of the court; chamberlains &c &c. and led by her guardian the venerable Duke de

* Wife of Espartero, who by the time this letter was written had fallen from power.

Bailon: her train as on a former occasion, was borne by the Marchioness of Valverde; the train of her sister the little princess was borne by the Marchioness of Alcanizes, one of the most beautiful women of Spain. Then came the Infanta Luisa Carlota, aunt to the Queen & princess, and wife to the Infante Don Francisco—with the princess her daughter; Then came Don Francisco himself, with his son the Duke of Cadiz, one of the candidates for the hand of the youthful queen. Then came a train of nobles and attendants of both sexes "too tedious to mention." The little queen ascended the throne and took her seat in the chair of State. Her ladies in attendance ranged themselves to her right on a bench assigned them,—and beyond them were seated the grandees of Spain. The Infante Don Francisco and his son the Duke of Cadiz took their seats in chairs immediately to the right of the throne. The queen's little sister, her Aunt Luisa Carlota, and the daughter of the latter, repaired to the royal tribune, where the queen & royal family sit on usual occasions. It is in a deep recess formed by an arch immediately opposite the grand altar, and is separated from the rest of the chapel by a screen or window of plate glass. Before I go a step further I must say something of the dress of the queen: but that is always a difficult matter with me, not being learned in these matters. It was of magnificent lace over a skirt of white satin or brocade; her train was scarlet velvet, deeply bordered or embroidered with gold. She wore a brilliant circlet of diamonds around her

head, to which was attached a splendid white lace veil. A broad ribband of some distinguished order, but of which I am not courtier enough to know, was worn over one shoulder—there were other decorations and jewels which I do not distinctly recollect; but I think I have mentioned enough to deck her out in regal style. The ceremony (Mass, music Te Deum &c) lasted about two hours and was conducted in very grand style. The Patriarch of the Indias is a man of most venerable appearance and he was assisted by a number of Church dignitaries in their sacerdotal robes. The music was excellent, and had a fine effect, resounding among the lofty vaults and arches of the chapel. In fact the union of religious and royal pomp, displayed in roman catholic ceremonial, and monarchical pageant is one of the most striking exhibitions that human ingenuity has devised and I never saw it presented with more effect than on the present occasion; where the sovereign was a virgin queen in her innocent and tender years, for the first time occupying a royal throne beside the altar, which no queen had occupied for centuries. You would have been charmed (good republican as you are) could you have seen the dignified yet simple grace with which the little sovereign conducted herself—seated thus alone, elevated in the midst of a great assemblage, and officiated to by venerable prelates of the highest order. But she is quite womanly both in her appearance and deportment. Though not quite thirteen years of age she looks to be fifteen at least, and acquits herself with

wonderful propriety and self possession. She improves too, daily in her appearance, and on this occasion looked quite handsome. It was a beautiful sight to see her at various parts of the service, rise from her chair, advance to the Prie Dieu and kneel down at it, with her prayer book; her long train extending behind her across the throne. It was a subject for a painter. When the ceremony was over she descended from the throne; was joined by the royal cortege and retired from the chapel in the same state in which she had entered; bowing to the corps diplomatic and to the different functionaries as she passed. —Thus have I given you another picture of the little Queen at this present moment, when a gleam of Sunshine sheds its splendor about her throne: how fleeting and deceptive that gleam may be; and what fearful gloom may follow it who can tell! Never have I witnessed any scene of human pomp and seeming prosperity with a deeper misgiving of the heart that all was hollow and precarious. On what quicksands all political power rests in this country is evidenced in the sudden manner in which the regency and all the state and grandeur and apparent popularity of Espartero have passed away, but a few months since, he stood beside the throne, apparently the protector of the youthful queen, and possessed of almost regal sway—at present he is an exile! Who shall say that the throne itself is secure, when such convulsions suddenly sweep away all those who surround it? As yet the queen has her extreme youth, and her freedom from political bias in

her favor. She has all the poetical interest of royalty to recommend her to the popular feeling; but the moment she is declared of age and assumes the reins of government she becomes a different being— and to which ever party or interest she inclines she becomes an object of hostility to all the rest. The great question of her marriage is one that is now threatening, not merely to throw the country into commotion, but to agitate the political circles of Europe; but before this can be settled plots and conspiracies are likely to take place and deadly feuds to break forth, that may fill this capital with alarm and make it the theatre of sanguinary scenes. Heaven grant that my forebodings may not take place, Heaven grant that the government may acquire solidity and be conducted on sound constitutional principles; that the little queen may be well and happily married and seated on a secure and prosperous throne. I consider, under all circumstances, a constitutional monarchy the best form of government for Spain in its present state of knowledge and improvement, and I believe it is the form desired by the great mass of the people; but there are some bigots in politics who would fain restore an absolute monarchy and zealots who would hurry every thing into a wild democracy. One of the latter made a startling speech in a recent political meeting, wherein reforms in the constitution were proposed abridging the power of the crown and taking from it the *Veto*. I shall be satisfied said this Loco Foco if you do away with the *veto*—but I should be much more satisfied if you would do away

with the *Queen!* This is the first time such an idea has been uttered—it appears to have met with no concurrence—but such a voice heard from the midst of the present revolutionary agitations is portentous.

And now, my dear Sister, I will conclude this long chapter of politics and court ceremonial—which is only meant for the meridian of the cottage and should not stray beyond the domestic circle of dear little Sunnyside. But I know these peeps at the great world will be relished by you all in your quiet retirement. I fear, to be sure, that I may turn the heads of my nieces with these descriptions of the little Queen and her royal state; her diamonds, and brocades and regal robes; and that they may be sighing now and then to go to Tarrytown church in long velvet trains and diamond coronets; and have Doctor Creighton officiate to them in pontifical state and ceremony, like the Patriarch of the Indias—but let them recollect that they have a safer seat on the sofa than the little Queen on her throne; that the cottage, if it has not the pomp, is at least free from the perils of the palace, and that they reign without dispute over the whole empire of Sunnyside. . . .

Your affectionate brother

WASHINGTON IRVING

On June 26, 1844 Irving left Madrid for Barcelona. With him he carried two letters from the President to the Queen, one congratulating her on her accession, the other sympathising with her on the death of her aunt. Here he remained for more than a month. The letter describes the journey and Barcelona, the refuge of the Spanish court in this season of the year.

Barcelona June 30th 1844

My dear Sarah,

I ARRIVED here yesterday afternoon after a pretty hard journey of three days and a half of almost constant travelling, having only twice an opportunity of reposing ourselves from about four until ten in the evening, dining time included. A considerable part of our journey lay through very wild mountainous scenery in Arragon and Catalonia; with old picturesque towns and villages a mixture of Moorish and Gothic, and people as wild and picturesque as their scenery. Much of the country however, had the arid, sun burnt, desolate character so prevalent in the Spanish landscape. In the last two days of our journey we suffered very much from heat, but still more from dust, which in fact was intolerable. The diligence at times was drawn by eight and even ten mules, clattering along far ahead, and raising dense clouds of dust, which envelloped the diligence and entered on every side. A great part of the scanty intervals given us for repose was expended in endeavoring to cool and cleanse ourselves. I had very pleasant fellow travellers; my good friend Mr Albuquerque who is in every respect the gentleman, and my good old crony D'Albergo di Primo, the Danish Chargé d'affaires; one of the best tempered kindest hearted, and gayest of human beings, a man who knows every body, of all ranks and conditions, and whom every body likes. He is quite a character. His passion seems to be to please and to oblige. From his

devotion to the sovereign and to the great he would pass for an arrant courtier, did not the same disposition to win favor and to oblige, extend to the humblest individuals. He is continually making presents to great and small rich and poor; and on our journey, when we occasionally walked through a village, he would dispense halfpence among the beggars and the children until we had a troop at our heels. He was in high good humour throughout the journey, and, when the heat and dust did not absolutely render merriment a kind of "flying in the face of nature," he and I had a merry time of it.

We all arrived in Barcelona about five oclock in the afternoon covered with dust, and so "way worn and travel stained," that, had not apartments been fortunately engaged for us in the principal hotel I doubt whether any decent landlord would have given us admission. After an hour or two spent in bathing and dressing, and another hour or so in dining, I had stretched myself on a sopha and was fast asleep when I was roused by the Prince Carini, who had heard of my arrival, and had come over, between the acts of the opera, to welcome me. The opera house is nearly opposite my hotel, so in a few moments I was in the prince's box, seated beside my friend the little Princess who gave me a most cordial reception. The opera house is spacious and beautiful: far superior in size and style to any of the theatres of Madrid; the troupe is very good and the scenery, dresses &c excellent. Indeed there are two Italian operas at Barcelona for the place is celebrated

for its musical taste, but that at which I was present is the best and most fashionable. I found there all the members of the diplomatic corps who had preceded me. The French Ambassador has a box furnished to him by the Municipality. I visited the box between the acts of the opera; and promised to dine with the Count and Countess de Bresson today. All that I have met seem delighted with the change from Madrid to Barcelona: and I do not wonder at it for this is really a very gay, animated city, beautifully situated with the Mediterranean spread out before it. It has the vivacity and somewhat of the air of a French town. The Rambla, a broad public walk shaded by trees, which passes through the centre of the city and is cooled by the sea breeze, is like the boulevards: always thronged; with cafés on each side. My windows overlook this promenade: and it was a most animated scene until past midnight; being a beautiful night with a full moon. There is also a noble terraced walk along the harbor, looking upon the sea which is a favorite resort after dinner. In a word, Barcelona during the present residence of the court seems like some fashionable watering place: and, in witnessing the general animation and vivacity, one would hardly believe that it is the same city which within the last two years has been the scene of repeated tumults and been twice bombarded. As yet, however, I have only glanced at the city from the balcony of my window and from a box at the opera, The ills of a city are not to be discovered at theatres and public promenades.

I am happy to learn that the baths have had the most favorable effect on the malady of the little queen. As I feel a strong sympathy with her as a fellow sufferer, as well as a general interest in her well being, I have hailed this news with great pleasure. Finding the baths of such service and the residence at Barcelona so favorable in other respects, it is probable the Queen will remain here until the end of September.

You will perceive by the papers that there has just been an important change in the Spanish cabinet and that General Narvaez is now Minister of State as well as president of the council. As far as I can judge at the moment I am inclined to think that this change will be favorable in its effects: as the cabinet will adhere to the constitution, but the government will be administered with vigor. As soon as the new cabinet is arranged I shall risk an audience of the Queen to present the letters from the President, one of congratulation on her majority, the other of condolence on the death of her aunt. The circumstances of that audience will be another chapter in the "romance of the palace," which I am dealing out to your mother by piece meal. By the way, I had begun this letter merely for yourself, but it must serve for her likewise as I have not time to write another; when you have read it therefore, you must send it to her. . . .

Your affectionate uncle

WASHINGTON IRVING

In March, 1844, the mother of the little Queen, Maria Christina, after an absence of four years, had returned in triumph to Madrid, and Irving, after his return from Barcelona, recounts further his acquaintance with her, telling stories of Isabella and giving a picture of General Narvaez, the enemy of Espartero and the military head of the new government. These two leaders of opposing parties alternated in power during a considerable part of Isabella's reign, which ended with a revolution in 1868. Two years later she abdicated in favor of her son, Alfonso the Twelfth, father of the present King of Spain, afterward living on, chiefly in Paris, until 1904.

The first of the succeeding three letters of Irving is a fragment incompletely superscribed, but the year can be established as 1844 and the place as Madrid. The second letter, to his niece, should evidently be assigned to January, 1845. The third, written four months later, brings to an end this group of letters with their romantic glimpses of the pomp and ceremony of an age that has passed into history.

Nov. 29th The royal banquet on the 27th was one of the grandest fetes I have ever witnessed. The guests assembled at the palace, according to invitation, at half past six. It is difficult to give any thing like an adequate idea of these state ceremonials to one who has not a tolerable idea of the Royal palace, on which so much of their effect depends. It is the most magnificent palace in Europe, as far as I have seen. Fancy an edifice much larger in front than our City Hall, and forming a square, the sides and rear equal to the front; and all built round spacious interior paved courts. You may imagine then what

great ranges of apartments it admits of. In fact only a portion of it is open and lighted up on each occasion. Yet the suites of saloons and chambers thus thrown open are immense. On arriving at the Palace we ascended the grand and eventful staircase, so often mentioned in my letters; on each side was a row of lacqueys, in royal livery, standing like statues on every second or third step, holding large flambeaux; with these were intermingled halberdiers, who struck the end of their halberds on the pavement in salutation, as each guest of note passed by. The number of guests was upwards of a hundred: composed of the cabinet ministers; the principal dignitaries of the Government, the Diplomatic Corps, with their ladies, (such as had any) and the ladies in attendance upon the royal family. The company assembled in two contiguous saloons; and being all in uniforms, made a brilliant appearance. The number of ladies was limited, being as I observed merely those of the Diplomatic corps, and those in attendance on the royal family, as, to venture beyond those limits, would have involved the necessity of innumerable invitations among the nobility to avoid creating jealousies and giving offence. All the places at table had been assigned according to strict etiquette and the laws of precedence. The chief officer of the Queen Mother's household came round with a written paper on which was noted who were to take in the several ladies to the banquet room, and where each was to be seated. According to this arrangement the French Ambassador, being the repre-

sentative of a monarch, was to take in the Queen: the rest of the Diplomatic corps succeeded according to their official rank and the date of their residence at the court; and it fell to my lot to take in the Princess de Carini, wife of the Neapolitan minister, and to take my seat on the left of Queen Maria Christina. I was well pleased with this arrangement as the Princess is very lively and sociable and we are great friends; but here a difficulty occurred; the princess was detained at home by indisposition. This occasioned a flaw in the order of precedence; but it was soon accomodated by substituting Madame Albuquerque, the next in diplomatic rank to the Princess de Carini. Nothing, as you may suppose, could have been more gratifying to me.

It was near eight OClock before we were summoned to the banquetting room. In going to it we passed through a magnificent range of apartments; among others the great saloon of the throne: all were brilliantly lighted; and you may imagine the effect of such a procession, through those vast and lofty chambers; of the various groupes of guards, domestics &c I never saw any thing more stately. The banquet was given in an immense hall of a quadrangular form, with vaulted cieling lofty as that of a church and painted with alegorical designs. It is called the hall of the columns; from the noble pillars which sustain the vaults. The table surrounded the halls thus ⌒ with openings on each side for the guests seated within the circle to enter, and for the servants to go to and fro. The queen was seated at

No. 1. and the queen mother at No. 2. The guests arranged themselves on both sides of the tables (that is to say, outside and inside of the circle, in the places assigned them. The distance across, from Queen to queen, was about eighty or ninety feet. The table was splendidly set out; the vast hall lighted up by a great number of chandaliers; candelabras &c and the tables were served by a legion of servants in rich court liveries; blue coats; with scarlet under clothes; the coats, waistcoats and small clothes all decorated with broad gold lace. During the repast a band of music in an outer hall; performed favorite airs from the most fashionable operas. The band was entirely of wind instruments, and the effect was delightful; the music being softened by distance so as not to stun the ear nor drown conversation. My seat at table was to the left of the queen mother, between her and Madame Albuquerque.* Across the table just opposite me was the queen's sister, the Infanta, and next to her Genl Narvaez, who had brought her in. My position was most agreeable. The Queen mother was extremely affable and conversed with that amiability and grace for which she is celebrated. The expression of her countenance as she converses is quite winning and her smile is fascinating, yet I would not have you suppose that she is mannered and artificial: nothing can be more easy, simple and natural than her whole deportment. She conversed alternately with the Portuguese minister who was seated on her right (being

* Wife of the Brazilian Minister.

my elder in office) and myself; and as the repast lasted for nearly a couple of hours, you may easily suppose that I had considerable conversation with her. She amused me with an account of a lesson the young queen & the infanta had had in shooting at a mark. The fears of the latter on first handling fire arms; her crying, before she could be prevailed upon to pull trigger, and her subsequent hardihood; having succeeded in hitting a paper which was put up as a mark. I presume as the Queen and her sister have to attend reviews and military ceremonies where there is much firing of musquetry & cannon, it is thought advisable to accustom them to the sound, and, indeed, in this country of plots, insurrections and revolutions, it behoves even princesses to know something of the use of fire arms. The young queen and the Infanta have practised riding on horseback since the return of their mother. I asked the latter if the queen had courage on horseback: "Yes," said she, "if any thing rather too much." I told her one could hardly have too much, as in courage on horseback consisted safety.—I am told in fact that the little queen is quite a bold rider and continually leaves her more timid sister behind.

In the course of conversation the Queen Mother asked me whether I had been at Naples, and finding that I had we had much to say about that city: about Italy in general and when she learnt that I had been in Sicily; that, cried she, is my native country: I was born at Palermo. Having visited that beautiful city during the festivities of Carnival I

retained a lively recollection of it and of its mercurial inhabitants.

In the midst of our conversation there was a sudden alarm throughout the assemblage. The young queen was taken unwell, rose from table and left the banquetting room. Every body started up; Genl Narvaez and several of the officers of the court and ladies in attendance hurried out; there was an anxious pause. The Queen Mother begged us all to resume our Seats, she was sure it was nothing serious. After a time one messenger after another came hurrying back with intelligence to the Queen mother. The queen was better: it was a slight inconvenience and had passed away. The fact at length came out; the little queen had been too tightly laced: They had endeavored to make a *fine figure* of her: She had borne with the uncomfortableness as long as possible, but at length was nearly overcome and had to seek relief. The last messenger brought word that being put quite at ease in her dress she had entirely recovered. "Well" said the Queen Mother smiling "tell her to leave her dress loose, to put on a shawl and to come back." In a little while the young queen returned to the banquetting hall, not envelloped in a shawl, but free from the misery of a fine figure. . . .

Madrid, Jan^{y} [1845]

My dear Sarah,

I RECEIVED your letter of the — yesterday just as I was going to Court to attend a Besamanos, so I determined not to read it until my return home, that

I might have leisure to enjoy it. I thank you for taking my hint and giving me more gossip about those precious folk Kate and Susie. You cannot be too ample and minute about them nor fear of praising them too much. You have no idea how I dwell upon every particular concerning them, and how often and often I read it over. I begin to think I have a little touch of dotage about them; a sign of gathering years; but you I trust will excuse it and indulge it.

Madrid continues to be gay and I to be dissipated but for the most part, I am dissipated *officially*, as I have to attend court fetes of all kinds, and dinners and balls given by personages in office. A few days since we had a grand review of all the troops, to the number of twelve or thirteen thousand. What gave it peculiar eclat was that the young queen, for the first time attended the review as commander in chief. It was what Genl Narvaez has been persuading her to do for a year past. She was mounted on a beautiful dun colored horse, perfectly well broken, and was dressed in a blue cloth riding habit and black beaver hat, quite a l'anglaise—with badges of the military rank of captain general. General Narvaez rode by her side and she was followed by a brilliant cortege of general officers after which came the royal carriages one containing the Queen Mother & the Infanta, another the Infante Don Francisco and the princesses his daughters &c &c The little queen was in high spirits and greatly delighted, and indeed the whole effect was charming.

I sallied out on foot to see the sight, and encountered the French Ambassador and his wife, (the Count and Countess de Bresson) likewise on foot. I joined them, and we had a famous trudge for two or three hours, among the troops, through the crowd; along the Prado, outside of the gates &c &c. The Countess is a capital hand for an expedition of the kind. She fears nothing, and is active and enterprising. After our perambulation we took our stand on one of the balconies of the British Embassy, to see the Queen receive the passing salute of the troops. After which I took a social dinner at the French Embassy and finished my evening at the Theatre of the Cruz, where I saw Moriani perform admirably in the opera of Rolla or the Artist—so there is one day's dissipation.

The next evening I was at a very brilliant ball at the Countess of Montijo's; which was pleasant to me from meeting there and having a good deal of chat with my favorites Mrs O'Shea and the fair Leocadia. I came away, however, very early.

Yesterday was a Besamanos, being the birth day of the infanta. It was as usual a splendid ceremony, but from its formality might have been dull had I not been in the neighborhood of Bulwer,* and the Prince Carini, who stand next to me in the Diplomatic line, and with whom I had the most amusing conversation; making our remarks upon the oddities of the Court, and the odd figures which passed as it were in review before us. I took occasion when the

* Henry Lytton Bulwer, English Minister to Spain.

young queen came along the line to speak to us, to congratulate her on her first military sally. She told me that she relished it highly. . . .

Madrid May 2, 1845

My dear Sarah,

I RECEIVED yesterday your letter of the 25th March; your "miserable scrawl" as you call it; but which I have read over and over with heartfelt pleasure. I find you begin to talk dubiously about your grand expedition to the Rhine & to Switzerland; about which you used to hold forth so confidently. I could not help picturing you to myself another Christiana setting forth with all her children on a Pilgrim's Progress, and I feared you would be sadly in want of a captain Great Heart to champion you. (I trust you have read the evangelical romance of John Bunyan.) . . .

I am still waiting for intelligence from Washington before I make my arrangements for the Summer. Should I conclude to pass it here, you need be under no apprehensions of my suffering from heat. I passed the summer before last in Madrid in my present quarters; and though out of health at the time, passed it very comfortably. My house is very large; the walls thick and the interior well ventilated. I shut out the glare and the heat of the day; remain in my spacious twilight saloons, which are almost as cool as vaults, until the sun has set, and then drive out to enjoy the evenings which are temperate,

and the nights which are heavenly. I do not know any thing more bland and delightful than the temperature of the Prado towards midnight in midsummer.

We have just had great festivities at Court in honor of the birth day of Queen Christina. A Besamanos, which was very magnificent but very fatiguing, as I had to be on my legs for upwards of three hours in the presence chamber; while all the world passed in review before the throne to pay homage to the royal family. Two days after there was a grand fete champetre at Vista Alegre, a rural possession of Queen Christina's about a couple of miles from Madrid. The grounds are laid out with groves, shrubberies; walks, canals &c and all kinds of amusements were prepared; flying horses, swings; roundabouts and riding at the ring: shooting with cross bows; gondolas on the canal &c &c &c nearly a thousand persons, the elite of Madrid were there. We assembled at four o'clock. And the pleasure ground presented a most animated and amusing picture. One old courtier fell off of a wooden horse and broke his head: a gondola in which was the Countess of Montijo and her party, upset in the canal (which is nine feet deep) and the ladies, among which was my fair friend Leocadia Zamora, were extricated from the water with some difficulty. In the evening we had fire works; a concert, and a repast, which last was served up in an immense tent, illuminated, as were several walks of the gardens, with innumerable chinese lamps. The weather was perfect; the trees

were all in leaf, the lilacs in flower, and the nightingales in full song. There were bands of music too stationed in different parts of the grounds; playing popular pieces from fashionable operas. Altogether it was one of the pleasantest and most successful fetes champetre that I have ever witnessed.

Yesterday I was at a splendid dinner given by the French Ambassador in honor of the day of Louis Philippe. The Embassy had recently been removed to the Benevente palace: and the apartments newly and richly furnished and decorated were first thrown open on this occasion. We sat down about forty persons to dinner, in full uniform. The table was splendidly set out, and the effect of the whole very brilliant. Now I trust we have got through great fetes for the season.

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